

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ADS-00 SY-05 SYE-00 PM-06  
SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 PA-01  
SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 /073 W  
-----062046 031153Z /12

O R 031009Z DEC 79  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6400  
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY DACCA  
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AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
USMISSION USNATO  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
CINCPAC  
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 8287

DEPT ALSO FOR A/SY/CC; CINCPAC & CINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12065: GDS 12-3-85 (TAYLOR, JAMES E.) OR-P  
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ASEC, AF, UR, MOPS  
SUBJ: (LOU) MONTHLY REPORT ON THE STATUS OF THE AFGHAN INSURGENCY

REF: KABUL 7813

1. (LOU) INTRODUCTORY NOTE: IN THE JUDGMENT OF THIS EMBASSY,  
THE CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT CAN BE USED TO BRIEF MEMBERS OF  
THE CONGRESS, SELECTED MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES (WITHOUT ATTRI-  
BUTION TO USG SOURCES), AND OFFICIALS OF FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS.  
THE OVERALL CLASSIFICATION OF THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN KEPT AT  
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TAIN MATERIAL BE WITHHELD AT THIS TIME. END OF INTRODUCTORY  
NOTE.

2. (C) SUMMARY: THE INSURGENCY WITHIN AFGHANISTAN CONTINUED  
TO SEETHE THROUGH NOV, BUT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TOOK  
THE MILITARY INITIATIVE IN SEVERAL AREAS, AND A NUMBER OF  
MORE AGGRESSIVE "OFFENSIVES" DEMONSTRATED THAT THE GOVERN-

MENT'S SUPERIOR FIREPOWER CAN PREVAIL ANYTIME THE AFGHAN MILITARY AND THE THOUSANDS OF SOVIET ADVISERS CAN BRING SUFFICIENT FORCE TO BEAR. KABUL EXPERIENCED NO MAJOR EXPLOSIONS DURING THE MONTH, THEREBY SUGGESTING THAT THE REGIME STILL RETAINS THE LOYALTY OF THE KEY MILITARY UNITS IN AND AROUND THE CAPITAL. HINTS HAVE SURFACED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE ENCOUNTERED MILITARY MANPOWER PROBLEMS, BUT THE ONSET OF WINTER MAY LESSEN THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF THIS PARTICULAR PROBLEM BY REDUCING THE MILITARY ACTIVITIES OF BOTH SIDES. DESPITE THE ONGOING CONFLICT, PRESIDENT HAFIZULLAH AMIN HAS COMPLETED ANOTHER MONTH IN OFFICE, AND IF THE KHALQIS CAN RETAIN THEIR INTERNAL UNITY AND DISCIPLINE, AS WELL AS THE LOYALTY OF THE MILITARY UNITS IN THE CAPITAL, TIME MAY BE ON THE SIDE OF THE REGIME. END OF SUMMARY.

3. (C) GOVERNMENT MOUNTS MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN PAKTIA PROVINCE. FROM THE REGIME'S POINT OF VIEW, THE HIGHLIGHT OF NOVEMBER'S DOMESTIC STRUGGLE WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN AFGHANISTAN'S EASTERN PROVINCE AIMED AT REASSERTING KABUL'S AUTHORITY OVER THIS REGION. BY EMPLOYING LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMOR AND AIR POWER, THE GOVERNMENT TEMPORARILY RELIEVED SEVERAL GARRISONS WHICH HAD BEEN BESIEGED FOR WEEKS, AND REESTABLISHED ITS TEMPORARY CONTROL OVER THE AREA'S ROAD NETWORK. HOW MANY OF THE INSURGENT FORCES WERE DESTROYED IN THE OPERATION IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY, BUT STATEMENTS EMANATING FROM SPOKESMAN FOR SOME OF THE EXILED GROUPS IN PESHAWAR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT

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THEIR FORCES HAD SUFFERED HIGHER THAN USUAL CASUALTIES AS A RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT OFFENSIVE. MORE THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES FLED TO PAKISTAN TO ESCAPE THE CONFLICT, AND CURRENT ESTIMATES PLACE THE TOTAL NUMBER OF AFGHANS IN PAKISTAN AT ABOUT 300,000. STORIES CIRCULATING IN KABUL CONTEND THAT THE PAKTIA OPERATION'S RELATIVE SOPHISTICATION AND SUCCESS POINT TO A HEAVY SOVIET INVOLVEMENT, ESPECIALLY IN THE PLANNING STAGE, ALTHOUGH UNCONFIRMED REPORTS GO EVEN FURTHER BY CLAIMING THAT SOVIET "ADVISERS" ACTUALLY PLAYED A DIRECT ROLE IN THE FIGHTING. AS THE MONTH CLOSED, THE INSURGENTS WERE ANNOUNCING A "COUNTEROFFENSIVE" AGAINST THE REGIME'S FORCES IN PAKTIA, ALTHOUGH WHAT HAS PROBABLY TAKEN PLACE IS THAT THE INSURGENTS HAVE MERELY REOCCUPIED MUCH OF THE TERRITORY FOLLOWING THE GOVERNMENT'S REDEPLOYMENT OF ITS MOST POWERFUL UNITS. THE ENTIRE EPISODE HIGHLIGHTS THE OVERALL TREND OF THE FIGHTING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, WHEREIN THE REGIME'S OVERWHELMING FIREPOWER PREDOMINATES AS LONG AS THAT POWER IS AVAILABLE. ONCE THE STRONGEST GOVERNMENT FORCES ARE WITHDRAWN FOR USE ELSEWHERE, HOWEVER, THE INSURGENTS APPEAR ABLE TO REOCCUPY MUCH OF THE RURAL TERRITORY OUTSIDE THE MAJOR CITIES AND TOWNS.

4. (C) HEAVY FIGHTING ERUPTS IN FAR NORTHEAST. BADA KHSHAN PROVINCE IN AFGHANISTAN'S REMOTE NORTHEAST ALSO WITNESSED HEAVY FIGHTING DURING THE MONTH, AS THE REGIME, FOLLOWING TACTICS SIMILAR TO THOSE IN PAKTIA, AMASSED HEAVY FORCES IN AN EFFORT TO REESTABLISH CONTROL OVER COMMUNICATIONS ROUTES AND TO REINFORCE THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF FAIZABAD. CURRENT REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THIS OFFENSIVE AS WELL, ALTHOUGH MOUNTED ON A SMALLER SCALE THAN IN PAKTIA, MET WITH REASONABLE SUCCESS. THE FIGHTING CONTINUES, HOWEVER, AND IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE REGIME CONTROLS MUCH OF BADA KHSHAN'S TOWERING COUNTRYSIDE.

5. (C) GOVERNMENT ALSO TAKES INITIATIVE NORTH OF KABUL. ANOTHER ELEMENT OF THE REGIME'S APPARENTLY MORE AGGRESSIVE  
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POLICY WAS A LIMITED OFFENSIVE TO CLEAR THE SHIBAR PASS ABOUT 60 MILES NORTHWEST OF KABUL ALONG THE ONLY EAST-WEST ROAD LEADING TO THE CENTRAL SPINE OF THE COUNTRY. WHOEVER CONTROLS THE SHIBAR CONTROLS ACCESS FROM THE EAST TO THE CENTRAL HAZARAJAT REGION, AND THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE WANTED TO SECURE ITS POSITION BEFORE THE ONSET OF WINTER. NORTH OF KABUL, BUT TO THE EAST OF THE MAIN KABUL-USSR HIGHWAY, HEAVY FIGHTING WAS REPORTED AROUND THE TOWNS OF BULBAHAR AND TAQAB. THIS REGION IS ADJACENT TO THE CRUCIAL BAGRAM AIR BASE, AND THE REGIME IS UNDOUBTEDLY DETERMINED TO PREVENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY SERIOUS THREAT TO BAGRAM.

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SMS-01 /064 W

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DEPT ALSO FOR A/SY/CC; CINCPAC AND CINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

6. (C) KABUL-KANDAHAR-HERAT HIGHWAY REMAINS A SHOOTING GALLERY. THERE WAS VIRTUALLY NO CHANGE IN THE SECURITY CONDITIONS SURROUNDING ROAD TRAVEL ALONG THE COUNTRY'S ONLY PAVED EAST-WEST HIGHWAY, WHICH IS TO SAY THAT VENTURING OUT ON THIS ROAD WAS FOOLHARDY EVEN WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY GOVERNMENT GUARDS IN ARMORED VEHICLES. AS A RESULT, AIR TRAVEL BETWEEN THESE THREE PRINCIPAL CITIES HAS BEEN THE ONLY SAFE MEANS, AND VIRTUALLY EVERY DOMESTIC FLIGHT IS NOW FULLY BOOKED WELL IN ADVANCE. A HAPLESS JAPANESE TOURIST TRAVELING TO KABUL FROM KANDAHAR IN A HEAVILY-GUARDED BUS CONVOY WAS CAPTURED BY A GROUP OF INSURGENTS WHO REPORTEDLY WAYLAID THE COLUMN AND OVERPOWERED THE GOVERNMENT TROOPS. HE LUCKILY SURVIVED THE ORDEAL, BUT ONLY  
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AFTER HAVING BEEN FORCED TO TREK CROSS-COUNTRY TO PAKISTAN WITH HIS CAPTORS. OTHERS WERE NOT SO FORTUNATE, HOWEVER, AS HE CLAIMED THE INSURGENTS WOULD SHOOT THOSE WHO COULD NOT MAINTAIN THE PACE. IN THIS REGARD, TWO WESTERN WORLD TRAVELERS (PROBABLY WEST GERMANS) APPARENTLY RAN AFOUL OF SOME VIOLENT INCIDENT IN THE KANDAHAR REGION, BECAUSE THEIR CORPSES TURNED UP IN THE CITY HOSPITAL EARLY IN NOVEMBER.

7. (C) KANDAHAR ITSELF REMAINS A VERY DANGEROUS PLACE INDEED, WITH GUNFIRE A DAILY ROUTINE. BOTH THE REGIME AND THE INSURGENTS ARE REPORTEDLY WORKING THEIR WAY DOWN THEIR RESPECTIVE "HIT LISTS" IN AND AROUND THE CITY, AND SOME TRAVELERS HAVE REPORTED THAT ASSASSINATIONS IN BROAD DAYLIGHT HAVE BECOME COMMONPLACE. OTHER REPORTS CONTEND THAT SOME SOVIETS HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO THIS VIOLENCE, BUT THERE IS NO FIRM INFORMATION AVAILABLE REGARDING HOW MANY SOVIETS MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.

8. (C) NO MAJOR EXPLOSIONS IN KABUL DURING THE MONTH. IN MARKED CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS MONTHS, NOVEMBER SAW NO MAJOR ERUPTIONS IN KABUL, THE POLITICAL HEART OF THE COUNTRY. SEVERAL INTERESTING DEVELOPMENTS OCCURRED, HOWEVER, WHICH

COULD HAVE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON THE REGIME'S STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL. THE ABORTED PROGRAM TO PUBLICIZE AT THE INTERIOR R MINISTRY THE NAMES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED BY THE REGIME (KABUL 8078) PROBABLY CREATED MANY MORE AT LEAST CLOSET MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION, DESPITE THAT PROGRAM'S BRIEF EXISTENCE. CLEARLY AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL POWDER-KEG THIS PROGRAM REPRESENTED, THE REGIME IS NOW PROVIDING SUCH INFORMATION ONLY AT WIDELY DISPERSED LOCAL POLICE PRECINCTS. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT DISENCHANTMENT AND OUT-RIGHT OPPOSITION WILL INCREASE AS THE GENERAL PUBLIC BECOMES CONFIDENTIAL

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MORE FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE EXTENT OF THIS REGIME'S REPRESSION.

9. (C) MOST OBSERVERS HERE HAVE LONG HELD THAT A MILITARY MAN-POWER SHORTAGE COULD EVENTUALLY POSE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES FOR THE REGIME, AND THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL HINTS LATELY THAT SUCH A SHORTAGE MAY BE ENCOUNTERED SOON. OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS, THE TROOPS IN A NUMBER OF MILITARY UNITS AROUND THE COUNTRY, WHO WERE SCHEDULED FOR DISCHARGE, HAVE "VOLUNTARILY" EXTENDED THEIR TERMS OF ENLISTMENT, IN ORDER TO FIGHT ON FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE REVOLUTION. WE DOUBT THE "VOLUNTARY" NATURE OF THIS PARTICULAR PROGRAM, AND WONDER IF THE REGIME HAS SIMPLY REACHED THE POINT WHERE REPLACEMENTS IN SUFFICIENT NUMBERS ARE UNAVAILABLE. IN THIS REGARD, SEVERAL EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE NOTICED AFGHAN GIS IN KABUL WHO APPEAR TO BE NO MORE THAN FIFTEEN OR SIXTEEN YEARS OLD. MOREOVER, THERE ARE FEWER GUARDS IN SOME CIVILIAN GOVT. BUILDINGS, WHO CARRY OLDER ARMS THAN BEFORE.

10. (C) ELSEWHERE ON THE "READINESS" SCENE, IN MID-NOVEMBER THE GOVERNMENT BEGAN ANNOUNCING WHAT COULD BE CALLED CIVIL DEFENSE MEASURES FOR KABUL'S CITIZENRY, A STEP THAT NOT ONLY PANICKED MOST OF KABUL'S RESIDENTS, BUT ALSO RAISED THE QUESTION OF WHY THE REGIME FELT COMPELLED TO ADOPT SUCH MEASURES AT THIS TIME. PROVIDING MORE GRIST FOR THE KABUL RUMOR MILL, THE REGIME HELD A "PRACTICE ALERT" THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 1, ALLEGEDLY TESTING THESE MEASURES. AS YET, NO THREAT APPEARS TO HAVE PROMPTED THIS "ALERT," AND IT MAY WELL HAVE BEEN MERELY A TEST OF CONTINGENCY PROCEDURES FOR THE CAPTIAL. IN THE SAME VEIN, THE GOVERNMENT IS CURRENTLY CONDUCTING IN KABUL A MEETING AIMED AT ESTABLISHING THE "NATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REVOLTUION," A MEETING ATTENDED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL COMMITTEES FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE REVOLUTION. THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION WILL PRESUMABLY ULTIMATELY REPRESENT THE HIGHEST BODY RESPONSIBLE FOR ORGANIZING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT IN COUNTERING THE INSURGENCY.

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11. (C) CONCLUSIONS. THE INSURGENCY CONTINUES TO SEETHE IN AFGHANISTAN'S COUNTRYSIDE, WHILE INSECURITY ALONG THE COUNTRY'S MAIN HIGHWAYS AND IN THE OTHER MAJOR CITIES REMAINS RELATIVELY HIGH. KABUL, HOWEVER, STAYED ESSENTIALLY QUIET THROUGHOUT THE MONTH, SUGGESTING THAT THE REGIME STILL RETAINS THE LOYALTY OF THE KEY MILITARY UNITS IN AND AROUND THE CITY. THE GOVERNMENT TOOK THE MILITARY INITIATIVE IN SEVERAL AREAS IN NOVEMBER, THEREBY DEMONSTRATING THAT THE REGIME CAN OVERPOWER THE STILL WOEFULLY DISORGANIZED OPPOSITION AS LONG AS IT CAN BRING SUFFICIENT FIREPOWER TO BEAR. ONCE THE MOST POWERFUL UNITS ARE REDEPLOYED, HOWEVER, THE INSURGENTS SEEM TO REOCCUPY "LOST" TERRITORY, A PHENOMENON THAT MAY NOW BE TAKING PLACE FOLLOWING THE GOVERNMENT'S MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN PAKTIA. THIS TO AND FRO STRUGGLE COULD CONTINUE INDEFINITELY, ALTHOUGH THE ONSET OF WINTER COULD REDUCE THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY ON BOTH SIDES. HOW LONG THE INSURGENTS CAN REMAIN IN THE FIELD IN THE FACE OF SEEMINGLY UNLIMITED SOVIET RESUPPLY EFFORTS REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE PAST MONTH COULD REPRESENT AN INDICATION THAT THE THOUSANDS OF SOVIET ADVISORS MAY BE MAKING THEIR PRESENCE FELT, ESPECIALLY AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MILITARY OPERATIONS WHICH WERE CARRIED OUT. THUS, THE INSURGENCY STILL CONSTITUTES NO DIRECT THREAT TO HAFIZULLAH AMIN'S REGIME, AND IF THE KHALQIS CAN RETAIN THEIR INTERNAL UNITY AND THE LOYALTY OF THE KEY MILITARY UNITS IN KABUL, TIME COULD BE ON THE SIDE OF THE REGIME IN ITS STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL.

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## Message Attributes

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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**TAGS:** PINS, PINT, ASEC, MOPS, AF, UR  
**To:** STATE ANKARA  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014